



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton
National Park

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

Boyd Evison, Executive Director of the Grand Teton Natural History Association and retired National Park Service leader dies after valiant battle with cancer.

National Park Service Intermountain Regional Director, Karen Wade, sadly announced that, Boyd Evison, beloved National Park Service leader for 40 plus years and more recently the Executive Director of the Grand Teton Natural History Association, died on Friday night, (October 4), in California, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Evison, who would have turned 70 years old on October 12, is considered to be one of the greatest and most influential leaders of the modern National Park Service. His career dedicated to conservation, environmental education and courageous leadership in the field of natural resource protection, touched the lives of thousands of National Park Service employees and influenced the overall management of the entire national park system and its service to 280 million annual visitors.

Evison, a native of Washington, D.C., received his Bachelor's of Science Degree in forestry & wildlife management from Colorado A&M in 1954. Later in his career, Evison received a Master's in environmental communications at the University of Wisconsin, at Madison in 1968.

Evison began working seasonally with the National Park Service in 1952 as a fire control aide in Grand Teton National Park, a park that would capture his heart throughout his life and where he served at the beginning, middle and end of his professional career.

Evison moved into the permanent ranks of the National Park Service in 1960 as a park ranger in Petrified Forest National Park. Subsequently he served in Lake Mead National Recreation Area and Hot Springs National Park before being accepted into the Department of the Interior's Management Development Program in Washington D.C. In D.C., he served as an interpretive planner; a division chief for the Division of Environmental Projects, including environmental education; and a senior staff person to the National Park Service Director and the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

In 1971, he returned to Grand Teton as the assistant superintendent, working with a wide array of community members and influential agency leaders, and developing important local relationships which served him well later. The Tetons and Jackson became a recurring theme in his life, even though it would be many years before he planted his roots deeply in the Jackson community upon retirement from the National Park Service.

Evison was too impressive a voice for conservation to remain undiscovered in one place and so very soon after returning to the Tetons he accepted his own superintendency in Tucson at Saguaro National Monument. He was there only briefly when he was called to serve as the superintendent of the National Park Service, Horace Albright Training Center in Grand Canyon National Park. At Albright he became well known to many future generations of employees who were exposed to his articulate vision for the place of parks in the nation and the world.

In 1975, Evison moved to Great Smoky Mountains National Park (Tennessee/North Carolina) to serve as superintendent. Of the many daunting challenges he faced was that of the European wild boar, a non-native species living in the park and which was multiplying in such great numbers that the damage to resources was extensive. Evison boldly contracted for hog hunters from out-of-state, which immediately set off a furor of local opposition. His bold action and refusal to back down resulted in the on-going reduction program that continues to this day. He also led a cutting-edge science program which was the beginning of his efforts throughout the rest of his career to enhance the use of parks as laboratories for study.

Evison left the Smokies in 1978 to serve as Assistant Director for Park Operations in Washington D.C. In 1978, he was offered, and declined, the position of Director, NPS, choosing instead to go to Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park as superintendent in 1980. In 1985, Evison moved to Alaska where he became regional director and faced the biggest challenge of his career when the Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred. His heroic and steadfast support for his superintendents during the cleanup and for years afterwards as resources damage assessments went through the legal process distinguish him in the annals of NPS history. Having successfully served six years as regional director in Alaska, Evison left for Denver in 1991 to be closer to aging family members. Evison served as deputy regional director in the Rocky Mountain Region until he was asked to serve as interim superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park during a period crucial to the completion of the general management plan from 1993 to November 1994. During this time he was instrumental in developing a rationale for setting the use numbers within the Colorado River Management Plan—numbers which continue to set the standard to this day. He also became personally involved in the issue of air quality and soundscape management, an interest that continued as he participated after retirement in the National Parks Overflight Working Group.

Evison retired from the National Park Service in 1994, providing time for him and his wife, Barbara to do the traveling they always enjoyed. But in 1999 the Teton's beckoned yet again, when Evison applied for the position of executive director of the Grand Teton Natural History Association. His resume was impressive and his dedication to a shared mission both proven and lifelong. The Board of Directors offered the position to Evison and he and his wife returned to Grand Teton and purchased a home in the area, where they have lived for the past three years.

Evison had a highly successful but all too brief tenure with the Grand Teton Natural History Association and is credited with expanding scientific and educational outreach opportunities through the work of the association as well as enhancing the long-standing partnership with the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

Throughout his NPS career and subsequently, Evison was called upon often to lead the development of Servicewide and multi-agency initiatives, give guidance in the transition to new management, and respond to emergencies. Some examples include: Co-chair of the NPS/National Academy re-visit and revision of "Science in the National Parks;" member of the NPS Inventory and Monitoring Initiative Work Group; member of the steering committee for the Discover Life in America Project (Great Smoky Mountains), and member of the Interagency Fire Management Policy Review Team (1988), and four years as a member of the National Park Service Advisory Board. Few probably know that the "Park Roads" booklet, that has provided philosophical guidance to planning park roads for years, was written by Boyd Evison. He recently worked internationally in the Czech Republic with the International Executive Service Corp. and in Bulgaria for the U.S. Agency for International Development. He was also a consultant on the staff of the President of National Geographic Television.

Evison received many accolades and prestigious awards throughout his NPS career and professional life, including the Department of the Interior's highest award, the Distinguished Service Award; the National Parks Conservation Association's Mather Award and the National Park Foundation's Pugsley Award. A few weeks ago he was awarded the George Melendez Wright Award for lifetime achievement by the George Wright Society. This award further emphasized his orientation to always put the resource first in every decision.

Boyd is survived by his beloved wife, Barbara, who has shared his career as a true partner, along with their son, Chris, and daughter, Kathy. The family expanded to include son-in-law, Randy Katz and daughter-in-law, Lauren. The last few years, one of Boyd's greatest joys has been being a grandfather to Joe and Sarah Katz.

Burial will be at Grand Canyon National Park on October 19, and memorial services at some future date (to be announced) will be held at Grand Teton National Park. In honor of Boyd, the family and the Grand Teton Natural History Association have established a Boyd Evison Graduate Fellowship to encourage scientific and conservation research in the national parks. Memorial donations may be made to the Boyd Evison Graduate Fellowship, c/o Grand Teton Natural History Association, PO Box 170, Moose WY, 83012. Cards may be sent to Barbara Evison, c/o Randy and Kathy Katz, 615 Walden Drive, Beverly Hills CA, 90210.

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